

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 EUR-12 EA-06 NEA-09 IO-10 ISO-00

CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 RSC-01

SCCT-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /101 W
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R 291751Z JAN 75

FM USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8191

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MEXICO CITY

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L EC BRUSSELS 0822

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, ILO, PLO, PFOR, AORG, ICFTU

SUBJECT: ICFTU LEADER CONSIDERS PLO OBSERVER STATUS AN
ACCOMPLISHED FACT

REF: PARIS 02256 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: ON JANUARY 28, ICFTU GENERAL SECRETARY
OTTO KERSTEN TOLD THE MISSION LABOR ATTACHE THAT PLO
OBSERVER STATUS AT THE ILO IS PRACTICALLY AN ACCOMPLISHED
FACT. REPORTS HE HAS RECEIVED FROM GENEVA AND ELSE-
WHERE INDICATE THERE IS LITTLE OR NO CHANCE OF POST-
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PONING THE ISSUE AT THE UPCOMING ILO GOVERNING BOARD

MEETING BECAUSE, HE SAID, "WE SIMPLY DO NOT HAVE THE VOTES." KERSTEN ADDED THAT THE ONLY HOPE NOW FOR PREVENTING THE EVENTUAL DISINTEGRATION OF THE ILO IS FOR DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN THE WORKERS GROUP TO BAND TOGETHER IN ORDER TO WIN THE ELECTIONS AT THE ILO CONFERENCE IN JUNE. END SUMMARY.

2. ICFTU GENERAL SECRETARY KERSTEN, WHO WAS NEVER VERY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF POSTPONING A DECISION ON PLO OBSERVER STATUS AT THE ILO GOVERNING BODY NEXT MONTH, IS NOW CONVICTED THERE IS PRACTICALLY NO HOPE FOR WINNING POSTPONEMENT. THE MISSION LABOR ATTACHE PRIVATELY BROACHED THE QUESTION OF POSTPONEMENT WITH KERSTEN FOLLOWING A MEETING WITH BRUSSELS-BASED LABOR ATTACHES IN WHICH KERSTEN SAID "THE PLO TRAIN HAS LEFT THE STATION" AND WARNED THAT DEMOCRATIC FORCES AT THE ILO MUST NOW CONCENTRATE ON WINNING ILO ELECTIONS IN JUNE IF THE ILO IS TO BE PRESERVED.

3. KERSTEN TOLD THE MISSION LABOR ATTACHE THAT HE DID NOT MENTION THE POSSIBILITY OF POSTPONING THE PLO QUESTION TO THE OTHER LABOR ATTACHES BECAUSE THE SITUATION IS PRACTICALLY HOPELESS AND MENTIONING IT WOULD HAVE SERVED NO USEFUL PURPOSE. "WE SIMPLY DO NOT HAVE THE VOTES," HE SAID, TO FORCE A POSTPONEMENT AT THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING. KERSTEN SAID THAT THIS CONCLUSION WAS BASED ON REPORTS HE RECEIVED FROM HIS "PEOPLE" IN GENEVA AND ELSEWHERE. HE PLANS TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION WITH THE AFL-CIO'S IRVING BROWN BEFORE THE ICFTU WORKER GROUP MEETING IN GENEVA NEXT MONTH "TO SEE WHAT CAN BE SALVAGED."

4. KERSTEN TOLD THE GROUP OF ATTACHES THAT HE IS DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF GRANTING THE PLO OBSERVER STATUS AND THAT HE HAS WARNED ICFTU AFFILIATES, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA, THAT THE USG AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS MIGHT DECIDE TO LEAVE THE ILO, WHICH WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT ILO PROGRAMS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES. KERSTEN ADDED THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF STRONG AFL-CIO AND US CONGRESSIONAL REACTION IS VERY REAL AND THAT THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. KERSTEN
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ANGRILY DENOUNCED WHAT HE TERMED "SUBMISSION TO ARAB BLACKMAIL/ IN FORCING PLO RECOGNITION WHICH COULD SERIOUSLY WEAKEN IF NOT DESTROY THE ILO'S TRIPARTITE STRUCTURE.

5. COMMENT: DESPITE KERSTEN'S IMPASSIONED RHETORIC AND HIS DENOUNCEMENT OF ARAB BLACKMAIL, IT NOW APPEARS DOUBTFUL THAT THE ICFTU MADE A SERIOUS EFFORT TO OBTAIN POSTPONEMENT OF THE DECISION ON PLO OBSERVER STATUS. ACCORDING TO

MISSION CONTACTS AT THE ICFTU SECRETARIAT AND AT THE ILO REGIONAL OFFICE HERE IN BRUSSELS, THE ICFTU IS ALREADY SERIOUSLY THREATENED WITH THE LOSS OF ITS NARROW VOTING MAJORITY IN THE ILO WORKERS GROUP AND IS THEREFORE RELUCTANT TO TAKE AN OPEN STAND ON THE PLO ISSUE FOR FEAR OF ANTAGONIZING ITS ARAB AND AFRICAN AFFILIATES. THUS, WHILE KERSTEN LIKE SO MANY OTHERS, HAS WELCOMED IRVING BROWN'S INITIATIVE, HE IS NOT WILLING TO RISK AN OPEN CONFRONTATION AND HAS APPARENTLY DISCARDED POSTPONEMENT AS A POSSIBILITY. GREENWALD

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